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# University of Alberta

Amass

by

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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Fine Arts

in

Painting

Department of Art and Design

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Spring 2012

Edmonton, Alberta

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Andrea Kastner

## Artist Statement

In one painting, a small clapboard home is being tugged across a bay. The inhabitants are moving, so they take their house with them. In another, a three story building is being demolished, leaving its staircase exposed, little tendrils of wiring and brick dangling in the air. One image came to me as a postcard and the other was a photograph I took recently, but together they begin to point at the fine line between what is left behind and what is preserved.

My work is concerned with images of excess, with the amassing of abundant amounts of stuff. To me these images draw a parallel to the feeling of being overwhelmed with the chaos of our own tumbling thoughts, which mulch together the old with the new, the important with the useless, like so many raw bags of trash being crushed inside the back of a garbage truck. Intelligence, it is said, has nothing new to discover: it has only to remove the rubble. My own work does something different yet. Rather than removing the rubble from view, I prefer to give it centre stage, to examine in loving painted detail the rubble which sticks in the gears of our well-functioning society. Rather than removing the rubble to uncover a hidden gem, I see my job as an artist reuniting the lost connections between the two.

This duality presents itself most readily in the paintings based around documentation of household garbage. This series began with *garbage excavations*, an earlier project consisting of archaeological digs through bags of garbage collected at random. Pouring the contents of the bag onto the floor of the studio, I documented this evidence like a surveyor or a detective. These paintings are my attempt to draw out a kind of poetic meaning from this research. They present scenes of invasion, where the detritus of our everyday begins to seep out of the cracks of ordinary cityscapes, confronting us with the things that we try to hide, both privately and in an organised societal way. Another group of paintings centres on documentation of my childhood basement, a part of the house where guests were never allowed. This basement is filled with the most fanciful assortment of things, from bags of insulation left behind by the previous owner to telephones that no longer work. I paint these things from crumpled photographs, drawing the connection between these belongings and the trash that it might become.

My work is anchored in scenes of exterior or interior space, in particular the alleyway and the basement. These are neglected, in-between spaces, in which the secret workings of homes and cities are more likely to be revealed than in well-appointed living rooms and polished façades. For me, examining the archaeology of these hidden realms presents itself like a voyage into the secrets of the psyche. If one thinks of the map as the text of a city, then walking through the alleyways is like reading between the lines. In these paintings, I use crumpling and collage as twin methods to try and look beyond my source imagery and tease out the hidden motivations and the level of unconscious denial that accompanies the process of rejection and acceptance in our daily lives.

By looking thoughtfully at the underbelly of things, at the hidden, the thrown away, the shadow side of how we define ourselves, I hope to illuminate the weight which all of this exerts on us. Every era is defined by what it chooses to disavow, but this does not lessen the influence, the unconscious pushback of what we look away from. By carefully painting these crumpled things, I am trying to redeem in visual language that which has been discarded.

Andrea Kastner

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## **Media**

*Waste Land*. Dir. Lucy Walker. Feat. Vik Muniz. Omega Projects, 02 Filmes, 2011.

*The Gleaners and I*. Dir. Agnes Varda. Feat. Agnes Varda. Ciné Tamaris, 2000.

"House on Loon Lake." Narr. Adam Beckman. *This American Life*. CBC Radio, 27 Nov. 2011.

Andrea Kastner  
**DVD Image List**

File Name: kastner.01  
Title: Ghost  
Date: 2012  
Materials: oil on canvas  
Dimensions: 122 x 152cm

File Name: kastner.02  
Title: Float  
Date: 2011  
Materials: oil on canvas  
Dimensions: 91 x 122cm

File Name: kastner.03  
Title: Urban Gleaner  
Date: 2011  
Materials: oil on canvas  
Dimensions: 152 x 244cm

File Name: kastner.04  
Title: Crumple  
Date: 2010  
Materials: oil on canvas  
Dimensions: 122 x 183cm

File Name: kastner.05  
Title: In Case  
Date: 2011  
Materials: oil on canvas  
Dimensions: 61 x 76cm

File Name: kastner.06  
Title: Demolition  
Date: 2012  
Materials: oil on canvas  
Dimensions: 213 x 152cm

File Name: kastner.07  
Title: Storage Crisis  
Date: 2012  
Materials: oil on canvas  
Dimensions: 107 x 227cm

File Name: kastner.08  
Title: Makeshift  
Date: 2011  
Materials: oil on canvas  
Dimensions: 91 x 91cm

File Name: kastner.09  
Title: Insulation Room  
Date: 2011  
Materials: oil on canvas  
Dimensions: 122 x 152cm

File Name: kastner.10  
Title: Seep  
Date: 2010  
Materials: oil on canvas  
Dimensions: 122 x 183cm

File Name: kastner.11  
Title: Installation View  
Date: 2012  
Materials: oil on canvas

File Name: kastner.12  
Title: Installation View  
Date: 2012  
Materials: oil on canvas

File Name: kastner.13  
Title: Installation View  
Date: 2012  
Materials: oil on canvas

File Name: kastner.14  
Title: Installation View  
Date: 2012  
Materials: oil on canvas

File Name: kastner.15  
Title: Installation View  
Date: 2012  
Materials: oil on canvas

File Name: kastner.16  
Title: Installation View  
Date: 2012  
Materials: oil on canvas

File Name: kastner.17  
Title: Installation View  
Date: 2012  
Materials: oil on canvas



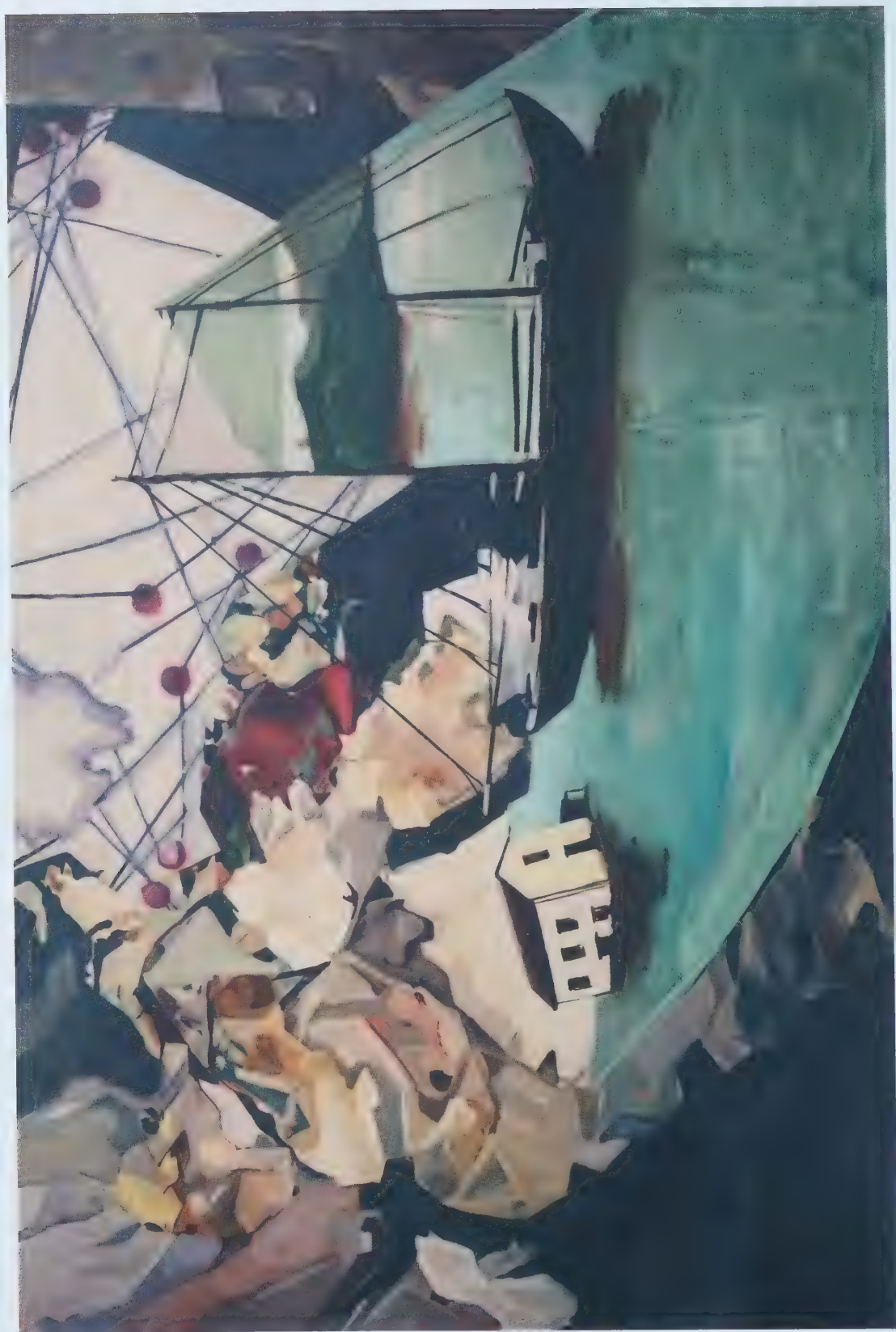
































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